



The Life and Ministry of Herman Bavinck

Acts 17:16-34

October 26, 2025

Pastor Jonathan Mills

Introduction: Theology must be willing to reform, and Bavinck can help us think more deeply about reforming how we engage with culture and politics as Christians.

Point 1: The Life of Herman Bavinck (1854-1921)

- What was Europe like in Herman Bavinck's Lifetime?
 - *"Modern Europe was the garden in which diverse species of secularism bloomed."*
 - *"The ground was moving beneath their feet. There was an epoch of staggering, broad, and often dramatic social, political, intellectual, and religious shifts."*
- A few quotes from Herman Bavinck's Journal
 - *"I continue to be struck by the duties that I, as a Christian in the Academy, have to fulfill here. May God grant me the strength to do this! Strength to show not only through words but also in deeds that I am a follower of Jesus."*
 - *"For the first time in my life I openly declared my public confession at the Lord's Table, that I am dead in my sins and transgressions, but my only hope is in the righteousness of Christ."*
 - *"Back to Leiden. Continuation of study under an attack of doubt, but also with feeling of the inner truth revealed in Jesus Christ."*

Point 2: Bavinck's Theology for Us

- God's Sovereignty over everything means that "All of Christianity is for all of life." (Luke 7:22-31)
- Because there is no "Golden Age" of history, every age offers Christians a place to be faithful.
- As Christians, we must follow Bavinck's lead to be both Orthodox and Modern, practicing true, good, and beautiful Dogmatic Theology for the age we live in.
 - *"To cherish the ancient simply because it is ancient, is neither Reformed nor Christian. A work of dogmatic theology should not simply describe what was true and valid but what abides as true and valid. It is rooted in the past but labors for the future."* (Herman Bavinck)
 - *"Far from making us narrow-minded, a Christian worldview aids us in becoming more whole in our thinking and living - indeed, a proper Christian worldview cultivates and nourishes Christian wisdom."* (N. Gray Sutanto)
- Growing in true wisdom takes the slow, careful, charitable engagement with culture that Bavinck models for us.

Response: Hope Church: We should seek to follow Bavinck's lead and grow in deep wisdom about our engagement with culture.

Sunday Text Questions

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- 1) What stood out to you the most about the life and ministry of Herman Bavinck?
- 2) What does it mean to “reform” the church? How is this different from other ways people seek change?
- 3) What impressed you about how Bavinck did theology?
- 4) What does Bavinck have to teach Christians today about engaging with culture?
- 5) How might we apply the lessons of Bavinck’s life, ministry, and theology to our church?